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## MESSAGE OF THE PRESIDENT.

RICHMOND, VA., Feb. 8, 1864.

*To the House of Representatives :*

In response to your resolution of the 12th ultimo, I herewith transmit, for your information, a communication from the Secretary of War, relative to the "domestic passport system" now enforced upon citizens travelling in some parts of the Confederate States outside of the lines of the armies.

JEFFERSON DAVIS.

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## COMMUNICATION OF THE SECRETARY OF WAR.

CONFEDERATE STATES OF AMERICA, }  
War Department, }  
Richmond, Va., Jan. 27, 1864. }

*To the President of the Confederate States :*

SIR: The resolution of the House of Representatives requesting the President "to communicate any orders or regulations establishing a domestic passport system for citizens, whether men or women, travelling within the Confederate States, outside the line of any army, the authority under which such orders and regulations are made, and the number and compensation of the officers and men employed in enforcing such system of domestic passports," has been referred by you to this department for reply.

The files and records of this department have been examined, and no orders or regulations are to be found establishing or regulating the system of passports now in use. The resolution of the House of Representatives has been referred to Brigadier General Winder for his report upon the origin, progress, and present condition of the system, and for copies of any orders under which it has existed, and for a statement of the number of persons employed, which report is herewith returned.

That report shows the manner in which the system was introduced into Richmond, and the causes which led to its further development in this city. In other cities and towns of the Confederacy, it has been under the control and direction of the military authorities, and its supervision has been, commonly, entrusted to provost marshals.

Its development through the country was probably due to the proclamations for the suspension of the writ of *habeas corpus*, and the necessity of providing measures to restrain stragglers and deserters, to prevent intercourse and communication with the enemy, and to detect spies and persons in the employ of the enemy from collecting information to the prejudice of the Confederacy.

In order to accomplish this object, the habit of requiring all persons to obtain passports became general, and, with all its inconveniences, has been productive of beneficial consequences in the accomplishment of these objects.

This department has no report of the persons employed in the offices of the provost marshals.

Such offices are generally established with a view to the police of their commands by the generals commanding departments, at the leading cities and towns therein, or, in some few instances, at the request of citizens, by the department, at posts where there are hospitals and depots, for the better police around them. Since no appropriation is made for provost marshals, they consist of officers with commissions. It has been the policy of this department to select for such posts officers disqualified from active service by wounds or disease, and to aid them, as far as necessary, to detail disabled soldiers. Such policy will be studiously pursued, and its observance urged on the attention of departmental commanders. The few detectives or civilians occasionally found necessary are paid out of the appropriation for the contingent expenses of the army.

Respectfully submitted,

JAMES A. SEDDON,  
*Secretary of War.*

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HEADQUARTERS DEPARTMENT OF HENRICO, }  
Richmond, January 26, 1864. }

HON. JAMES A. SEDDON, *Secretary of War* :

SIR: I have the honor to submit, in obedience to orders, the report of Major E. Griswold, Provost Marshal, upon the subject of the passport system of this Department, with accompanying papers, called for by a resolution of the House of Representatives.

Very respectfully, your obedient servant,

JOHN H. WINDER, *Brigadier General*.

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PROVOST MARSHAL'S OFFICE, }  
Richmond, January 22, 1864. }

Brigadier General JOHN H. WINDER,

*Commanding Department of Henrico* :

GENERAL: In regard to the accompanying resolution of the House of Representatives, of the date of the 12th instant, and the endorsement of the Secretary of War thereon, I have the honor to state, that, having been assigned to duty in this city as provost marshal, (under whose charge the passport office is placed,) on the 5th of May, 1862, I have no personal knowledge of the orders and regulations establishing a domestic passport system. I found it in full operation. I have, however, procured and communicate the following information as to the origin of the system in this city. When the Government was transferred to Richmond, and the army was at Manassas, applications to the then Secretary of War, Hon. L. P. Walker, were frequently made by officers and citizens, having relatives in the army, for passports to the army; and it was common, also, for citizens, desirous of going to different sections of the Confederacy, to ask for passports to facilitate traveling, passing pickets and guards, and, as a certificate of localty through the country, then sensitive in regard to the status of all strangers.

These applications became so frequent that a clerk was assigned to that duty—first, for a short time, Mr. Sheppard—and, afterwards, Mr. J. B. Jones, now in the war office, who states to me, in writing, “that the origin of the passport office consisted merely in a verbal order from the first Secretary of War, and, subsequently, I (Mr. Jones,) was requested to take charge of the office by the same Secretary, in August, 1861. Afterwards, I was continued in charge of the office by Hon. J. P. Benjamin, Secretary of War, and continued in charge until I received an order from the Adjutant General, (General Cooper,) to discontinue my duty in that office. Martial law had been proclaimed a few days previously. Subsequently, I



received an order from the Hon. Secretary of War, Mr. Benjamin, to act under the instructions of Brigadier General Winder."

This is the statement of Mr. Jones in writing. He also informs me, verbally, that these orders, except that from the Adjutant General, were *verbal*, and that, up to the time of the declaration of martial law, the passport system was not compulsory, but a very large proportion of citizens voluntarily applied for and received passports.

After the declaration of martial law in the city of Richmond and its vicinity, (which declaration appears in General Orders, No. 9, A: and I. General's office, March 1st, 1862,) Brigadier General Winder being commandant of the department of Henrico, and Mr. Jones passport clerk, the following order was issued:

"HEADQUARTERS DEPARTMENT OF HENRICO, }  
March 4, 1862. }

"GENERAL ORDERS, }  
No. 3. }

"By virtue of General Orders, No. 9, Adjutant and Inspector General's office, March 1st, 1862:

"I. \* \* \* \* \*

"II. The passport office is continued at its present location, under the charge of the provost marshal."

At this time, to maintain martial law, a provost guard was stationed in the city, and at the different railroad depots and other exits from the city.

On the 6th day of March, 1862, and on the 17th day of March, 1862, General Orders, Nos. 4 and 9, were issued from the department of Henrico, prohibiting the passing beyond the corporate limits of the city by any conveyance or vehicle without a passport.

These orders were, at the times of their date, published for the information of citizens at large, and recognized by the Secretaries of War in conferences, verbal orders and written directions of a temporary character, such as orders "to suspend all passports" on certain roads, "the transportation being occupied in carrying troops."

Before, however, the declaration of martial law, and while obtaining passports was not compulsory, the practice became general to procure them. In what ways the system originated in other parts of the Confederacy, I am unable to state, other than it followed the declaration of martial law, wherever declared. This department has no control of the system beyond the limits of the department.

In reference to that portion of the resolution of the House of Representatives, calling for "the number and compensation of the officers and men employed in enforcing such system," so far as regards this city, I have the honor to submit a copy of the report made to you on the 18th instant, upon the call of the Confederate States Senate, and here marked "A," adding thereto, that a guard, not more than five at any one train, with a non-commissioned officer are placed at the depots of the different railroads to inspect passports, and prevent any one leaving who has not a passport.

In regard to that portion of the endorsement of the Secretary of War, upon the resolution of the House, calling for "the progress and present condition of the system," so far as regards the office in Richmond, I report that there are issued from the passport office, daily, an average of one thousand three hundred and fifty passports. At times it reaches a much larger number. The passports are signed by a clerk, appointed for that purpose, and by myself. They are then delivered to a commissioned officer in charge of the clerks, (detailed for light duty by reason of disability,) who receipts for them and distributes them to the clerks taking their receipts, and when the clerks are relieved from duty by others, they account for all passports issued and cancelled, and return those not issued, a report of which is daily made to me, and daily compared with the receipts.

On account of the large number of passports issued, it was found necessary and conducive to dispatch, as well as exactitude, to assign one clerk to each of the main roads. These clerks are divided into squads which relieve each other. There is also an apartment for issuing passports to women separate from that for men. There are office hours named, but the office is never closed in the day nor at night, as long as any applicant remains in the vicinity of the office desiring a passport.

Sometimes applicants come after the office is closed at night, who were not present when it closed; these are disappointed. On occasions the crowd is so great that it is impossible for all to find access to the office in time for the train they take to leave the city. On one occasion, recently, when the office had been kept open till half-past one o'clock at night, for the accommodation of furloughed soldiers, it was closed before all were accommodated, because word was sent that the transportation office was closed, and, without access to both offices, applicants could not leave the city; but, generally, both offices are kept open as long as there are any furloughed soldiers to go.

A register is kept by each clerk of every person who obtains a passport, and the voucher or authority upon which it is obtained, filed. Cases are daily occurring where deserters and persons with fraudulent papers are thus arrested. In this connection, I beg to refer to my report made to you, by your order, of date the 10th January, 1863, at the call of the Secretary of War, in regard "to the policy of abolishing the passport system in whole or in part."

When the present law of Congress, subjecting to conscription all who had substitutes, was passed, and the orders of the Adjutant General were published, I called, by your direction, upon Colonel Preston, in charge of the bureau of conscription, and arranged with him a rule, by which all citizens of Virginia having substitutes and calling for passports, should report themselves first to the enrolling officer; and all citizens of other States should report to the conscript bureau and obtain a certificate, a duplicate of which should be filed in the passport office, as the voucher for a passport.

This rule does not in any way trench upon the privilege they have under the law to volunteer, &c., but secures their names and residence to the conscript officers, and prevents their going to any locality

beyond the reach of conscription. For a short time after the passage of the present law, this Department having no sufficient number of guards or pickets to prevent an escape to the United States, numbers, with fraudulent passports and others with no passports, pushed for the Rappahannock, and obtained comparatively easy exit at its numerous ferries. Fearing this result, while the law was under consideration and afterwards, this department asked for additional officers to be placed at these ferries. The Secretary of War took measures to stop these escapes, directing Major General Elzey to have the roads and ferries picketed, and requiring all passports in that direction to be approved at his headquarters.

Believing this covers the whole ground of inquiry, so far as regards the passport system here,

I am, respectfully, yours, &c.,

E. GRISWOLD,  
*Major and Provost Marshal.*

Official :

JOHN H. WINDER,  
*Brigadier General.*



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PROVOST MARSHAL'S OFFICE, }  
Richmond, Jan. 15, 1863. }

Brig. General JOHN H. WINDER,  
*Commanding Department Henrico :*

GENERAL: Of the policy of abolishing the passport system in whole or in part, I report as requested, such opinions as my experience suggests.

That the system is obnoxious and trenches odiously upon personal liberty, there is no question, and that it should be abolished, unless sternly demanded by the exigencies of the War, and the safety of our cause, there is no doubt.

Its operation includes, of course, the high and low, rich and poor, the loyal and disloyal, and is attended frequently with vexatious delays, and sometimes with questionings and interviews, wounding to the self-respect of worthy and good citizens.

It is just, however, to say, that much of the complaint it occasions arises, not so much from any intentional disrespect on the part of officials, as from the offended pride and dignity of those inaccustomed to such restraints, and whose conscious integrity or high position, makes the interruption and questioning offensive. Nothing, however, can excuse or justify this interruption of personal liberty, but the sternest exigencies of the service.

I have, therefore, carefully endeavored to devise some expedient to avoid the difficulties which must arise, without the check which passports impose.

Only a few days experience in this office will convince any one that without passports, desertions from our armies would increase to such an extent as to be truly disastrous. Nothing could prevent the soldier, who desired to do so, from putting on citizens' dress and returning to his home or going where he choose. Now a passport must be obtained, every person whose age subjects him to military service must give an account of himself, must produce his discharge or evidence of substitution, &c.

The clerks at the passport table are familiar with the forms and authority of furloughs, leaves of absence, sick leave, discharges, &c., &c. In most instances they can verify the handwriting of the officers signing them, and if a case of doubt arises, it is referred to me or is sent to the proper department to ascertain if the signatures are genuine. Nor must it be supposed that efforts, *even now* with this check, are few to evade service or to desert. Daily forged, illegal, informal and unauthorized furloughs, sick leaves &c., are presented.

This effort to avoid service, in a vast many cases, does not arise from disaffection to the cause or want of courage. Far from it. Very many earnest patriots who would not hesitate to shoulder their muskets and volunteer in a fight, and who would peril their lives for the cause,





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